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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a training program designed to train paraprofessional student assistants for the dual positions of peer tutor and peer adviser. Skills related to study strategies, reading comprehension improvement, time management, and test-taking are detailed as methods for trainees to develop skills in the cognitive and affective learning domains. The goals of the in-service training program are stated and program evaluation criteria are enumerated. Tables are included that outline the: (1) role and skills of a peer adviser; (2) role and skills of a peer tutor; (3) general orientation to the program and position of adviser/tutor; (4) development of student study habits and attitudes, communication skills, and flexibility and sensitivity in working with students with special learning needs; and (5) the evaluation of skills, student development, and the program. (NRB)

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DESIGNING A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR TUTOR/ADVISERS

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Designing a Training Program for Tutor/Advisers

Many learning assistance support skills programs on the college level depend upon the aid of peer tutors and peer advisers to offer academic counseling and tutoring. However, in many cases, the functions of both positions in tutoring and advising entail similar pre-requisite skills in working with students with special learning needs. As a result, at the Center for Human Enrichment at the University of Northern Colorado peer tutors and peer advisers are selected for positions as student assistants who offer both tutoring and advising to students. The combined positions offer a unique blend of services and skills; in addition, instead of having two separate staffs, one in tutoring and one in advising, a more cohesive paraprofessional support staff is developed. Similarly, if the position responsibilities and pre-requisite skills of the two functions are analyzed in relation to a holistic approach in working in a support skills program (See Tables A-D), common themes appear: the need for peer tutors and advisers to have good communication skills, to have a good background in workable study methods, to have a clear sense of university and support skills requirements and services, to possess a genuine interest in working with people, and to possess a sensitivity and flexibility in working with students who may be culturally and linguistically different, who may be older, or who may have special learning needs. Therefore, in training student assistants for the dual tutor/advisers positions at the Center for Human Enrichment, a special training program was developed to help the paraprofessionals develop their skills in working with the students in the center.

The training program that was developed at the Center for Human Enrichment offers a unique blend of counseling, advising, human interaction skills along with skills designed to promote an awareness of alternative learning methods and styles, including those skills related to study strategies, reading comprehension improvement, time management, and test-taking. The component co-ordinators at the center

believe that both tutors and advisers need to be aware of the importance of both the cognitive and affective learning domains and that the student assistants who offer tutorial and advising services need to have an opportunity for developing their skills in each of those areas. Consequently, the goals of the in-service training program encompass the following:

1) To explain and clarify university and program requirements and services;

2) To assist tutor/advisers in the development of their human interaction communication skills in establishing and maintaining open, caring, supportive relationships with their students;

3) To assist tutor/advisers in learning how to explain and clarify important study strategies and methods of survival in college;

4) To promote cultural awareness and sensitivity in working with students who exhibit special learning needs;

5) To create an open atmosphere of communication between the tutor/advisers and the component co-ordinators so that special areas of concern may be discussed, so that tutor/advisers may be able to role-play and process difficult tutoring or advising situations, so that student progress may be evaluated on an on-going basis, and so that overall program effectiveness may be assessed.

A more detailed outline of specific training topics for tutor/adviser in-service is described in Tables E-I.

Whenever a training program is designed for a learning assistance program, however, the following criteria may be used to evaluate its comprehensiveness:

1) Pre-assessment of tutor/adviser skills and background;

2) Opportunity to describe and clarify university and program procedures;

3) Opportunity to role play situations that foster the development of human interaction communication skills and to role play actual problem situations that occur between students and tutor/advisers;

4) Opportunity to process tutor/adviser - student interactions;

5) Opportunity to learn new strategies for dealing with student problems;

6) Opportunity to develop an awareness and sensitivity in working with special needs of students in a support skills program;

7) On-going communication with component co-ordinators;

8) On-going evaluation of program;

9) Integration of tutor/adviser suggestions with training program and support skills program as a whole.

Although scheduling problems and other time commitments may discourage a program director from conducting on-going in-service training for para-professionals, the overall benefits from such a program, including combining the dual functions of tutors and advisers into one position, cannot be underestimated. Staff cohesiveness is built as tutor/advisers gain a more secure sense of their position responsibilities and of the growth of their own skills; communication and the opportunity for feedback about student progress and program effectiveness is enhanced; in addition, the long-range commitment of the tutor/advisers to the program and to the students is increased as they realize their vital importance in helping students succeed in a college environment.

THE ROLE OF A PEER ADVISER

I FACILITATE COMMUNICATION ON AN ON-GOING BASIS

- SUPPORT SKILLS PROGRAM
- UNIVERSITY

II INTERPRET UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

- REGISTRATION INFORMATION
- GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS
- MAJOR AND MINOR REQUIREMENTS
- GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS
- ACADEMIC PROBATION
- FINANCIAL AID

III PROVIDE FEEDBACK ABOUT COURSE PROGRESS

- CONTACT STUDENT INSTRUCTORS
- INTERPRET INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS TO STUDENTS

IV LISTEN TO LEARNING NEEDS OF STUDENTS

- ESTABLISH SUPPORTIVE & CARING RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS
- PROVIDE POSITIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK TO STUDENT ABOUT
  - STUDY ATTITUDES & HABITS
  - COLLEGE SURVIVAL
- OFFER ALTERNATIVES FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE

V REFER STUDENTS TO CAMPUS RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- TUTORIAL SERVICES
- COUNSELING SERVICES
- CAREER SERVICES
- HEALTH SERVICES
- FINANCIAL AID OFFICE
- JOB PLACEMENT

THE ROLE OF A PEER ADVISER

VI PROVIDE ON-GOING FEEDBACK TO COMPONENT COORDINATOR

VII DOCUMENT STUDENT CONTACTS

VIII ASSIST IN PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

TABLE B

SKILLS OF A PEER ADVISER

I ABILITY TO ESTABLISH OPEN, CARING RELATIONSHIPS

II ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ONE'S FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS CLEARLY

III ABILITY TO ACCURATELY IDENTIFY LEARNING NEEDS OF STUDENTS

IV ABILITY TO INTERPRET UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

V ABILITY TO WORK WITH A SUPPORT STAFF

VI ABILITY TO MAINTAIN GOOD COMMUNICATION WITH COMPONENT COORDINATOR

VII ABILITY TO PROVIDE ON-GOING ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS

VIII ABILITY TO WRITE CLEAR EVALUATIONS OF STUDENT PROGRESS

IX STRONG ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

X POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT

XI FLEXIBILITY IN WORKING WITH A VARIETY OF PEOPLE

XII ABILITY TO WORK WITH STUDENTS WHO MAY BE HANDICAPPED, CULTURALLY DIFFERENT, OR LINGUISTICALLY DIFFERENT

XIII ABILITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ABOUT GOOD STUDY SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

XIV AWARENESS OF CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

XV ABILITY TO INFLUENCE OTHERS TO ENHANCE POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT, MOTIVATION, AND DESIRE FOR SUCCESS

XVI OVERALL GENUINE INTEREST IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

I ESTABLISH TUTORING SCHEDULE WITH ASSIGNED STUDENTS

II DETERMINE SPECIFIC TUTORING GOALS FOR STUDENT

III RESPOND TO SPECIFIC TUTORING NEEDS OF STUDENTS

- ASSIST IN NOTE-TAKING SKILLS
- OFFER TEST-TAKING HINTS
- OFFER SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION
- CLARIFY COURSE SYLLABUS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS
- OFFER SUGGESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING COURSE TEXT
- OFFER SUGGESTIONS FOR TIME MANAGEMENT
- PROVIDE SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT CONTENT
- ASSIST STUDENTS IN PROBING SKILLS ABOUT COURSE CONTENT
- PROVIDE PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH SKILLS SPECIFIC TO COURSE (I.E. MATH PROBLEMS, FOREIGN LANGUAGE DIALOGUE)
- DEVELOP MOCK TESTING SESSIONS

IV EVALUATE STUDENT'S PROGRESS IN TUTORING

V OFFER LEARNING ALTERNATIVES

VI RESPOND TO STUDENT'S DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING

- BE AWARE OF OUT-OF-THE-CLASSROOM INTERFERENCES IN LEARNING
- ESTABLISH OPEN, CARING, SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
- LISTEN TO STUDENT'S NEEDS
- PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK ABOUT LEARNING IN A COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

VII REFER STUDENTS TO OTHER CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES AS NEEDED

VIII MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION WITH INSTRUCTOR ABOUT STUDENT PROGRESS

IX MAINTAIN ON-GOING COMMUNICATION WITH COMPONENT CO-ORDINATOR

X MAINTAIN CLEAR & ACCURATE TUTOR LOGS

XI ASSIST IN EVALUATIONS OF STUDENTS AND TUTORING PROGRAM AS A WHOLE

SKILLS OF A PEER TUTOR

I STRONG ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

II GOOD STUDY HABITS AND ATTITUDES

III GENUINE INTEREST IN WORKING WITH STUDENTS

IV POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT

V ABILITY TO DETERMINE LEARNING NEEDS OF STUDENTS

VI ABILITY TO DETERMINE TUTORING GOALS

VII ABILITY TO INTERPRET COURSE MATERIAL

VIII ABILITY TO OFFER SUGGESTIONS ABOUT STUDY HABITS & ATTITUDES

IX ABILITY TO OFFER SUGGESTIONS ABOUT SPECIFIC STUDY TECHNIQUES

X ABILITY TO PROBE AND USE QUESTIONING STRATEGIES

XI ABILITY TO USE A VARIETY OF TUTORING STRATEGIES

XII ABILITY TO EVALUATE STUDENT PROGRESS

XIII ABILITY TO ESTABLISH OPEN, CARING RELATIONSHIPS

XIV ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ONE'S FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS CLEARLY

XV ABILITY TO ENHANCE STUDENT'S POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT, MOTIVATION, AND DESIRE FOR SUCCESS

XVI ABILITY TO WORK WITH A VARIETY OF PEOPLE

XVII ABILITY TO WORK WITH THE HANDICAPPED, CULTURALLY DIFFERENT, OR LINGUISTICALLY DIFFERENT

XVIII ABILITY TO REFER STUDENTS TO CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

XVIX ABILITY TO MAINTAIN CLEAR & ACCURATE PROGRAM REPORTS

XX ABILITY TO MAINTAIN GOOD COMMUNICATION WITH COMPONENT COORDINATOR

GENERAL ORIENTATION

DESCRIPTION OF JOB AND POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

DESCRIPTION OF SUPPORT SKILLS PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION OF UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

- GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS
- MAJOR & MINOR REQUIREMENTS
- ACADEMIC PROBATION
- REGISTRATION PROCESS
- CAREER RESOURCES
- FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION OF CAMPUS & COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- TUTORIAL SERVICES
- COUNSELING SERVICES
- JOB OPPORTUNITIES
- HEALTH SERVICES
- FINANCIAL AID OFFICE
- UNIVERSITY CENTER RESOURCES

DESCRIPTION OF ACADEMIC COURSES

- SPECIAL COURSES OPEN ONLY TO STUDENTS IN SUPPORT SKILLS PROGRAM
    - ENGLISH PROGRAM
    - READING COURSES
- "PREFERRED" COURSES FOR STUDENTS IN SUPPORT SKILLS PROGRAM
- DESCRIPTION OF COURSES WITH SPECIAL PRE-REQUISITES

DESCRIPTION OF DOCUMENTATION OF STUDENT CONTACTS

- MAINTENANCE OF TUTOR & ADVISER LOGS
- MAINTENANCE OF STUDENT FOLDERS
- TIME CARDS

DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT STUDY HABITS AND ATTITUDES

ESTABLISHING A GOOD STUDY ENVIRONMENT

TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

GOAL-SETTING

TIPS ON SURVIVING IN COLLEGE

TIME MANAGEMENT

NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

READING COLLEGE TEXTBOOKS

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION

IMPROVING MEMORY

SPECIAL STUDY STRATEGIES

DEALING WITH COLLEGE VOCABULARY

TEST-TAKING SKILLS

DEALING WITH INSTRUCTORS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION HINTS

DEALING WITH "UNEXPECTED" GRADES

COMPUTING G.P.A.

IMPROVING G.P.A.

PLANNING A GOOD COURSE SCHEDULE

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

ESTABLISHING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH A STUDENT IN TUTORING & ADVISING

RECOGNIZING SELF PERCEPTIONS & EXPECTATIONS

RECOGNIZING STUDENT STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

LISTENING

BUILDING AN OPEN, CARING RELATIONSHIP

DEVELOPING QUESTIONS & PROBING STRATEGIES

SELF-DISCLOSING

CONFRONTING STUDENT BEHAVIOR, ATTITUDES, & FEELINGS

GIVING FEEDBACK

REDUCING STRESS

ESTABLISHING CLOSURE IN A TUTORING OR ADVISING SITUATION

DEVELOPMENT OF FLEXIBILITY & SENSITIVITY IN WORKING WITH A VARIETY OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS

SENSITIVITY IN WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT

SENSITIVITY IN WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE LINGUISTICALLY DIFFERENT

SENSITIVITY IN WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE HANDICAPPED

STRATEGIES IN WORKING WITH THE HANDICAPPED

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHODS & STYLES

STRATEGIES IN WORKING WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS

AWARENESS OF RESOURCES IN WORKING WITH THE LEARNING DISABLED

SENSITIVITY IN WORKING WITH OLDER STUDENTS

EVALUATION OF SKILLS, STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, & PROGRAM

EVALUATION OF TUTOR/ADVISER GROWTH IN SKILLS

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PROGRESS

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SUPPORT SKILLS PROGRAM

ON-GOING OPPORTUNITY FOR ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM PROGRESS & FOR RE-FORMULATING PROGRAM GOALS